

This Week In Congress

May 17, 2004

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Bringing Down the Costs of Health Care, Insurance

This week, I supported House passage of legislation designed to help bring down the rising costs of health care and health insurance. Controlling these costs would give more Americans access to insurance coverage and decrease the overall costs associated with receiving health care.

Medical liability reform is an important step to help keep malpractice insurance costs down. H.R. 4280, the Help Efficient, Accessible, Low Cost, Timely Healthcare (HEALTH) Act of 2004, would improve patient access to services and reduce the burden that the liability system places on the health care delivery system. This legislation would place a limit on malpractice suits nationwide in order to help keep our doctors in business and address the steady rise of health care costs.

Another bill, H.R. 4279, would allow up to \$500 of unused funds to be carried forward in the Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) for use during the next year, or as a contribution to a Health Savings Account (HSA). Health FSAs are tax-free, employer-sponsored benefit plans that reimburse employees for qualified health care expenses. Employers and employees can both contribute to FSAs on a pre-tax basis. However, any unused funds remaining in the FSA at the end of the year are forfeited. The ability to roll over funds to the next year will encourage more employees to participate in FSAs without the fear of losing the money at the end of the year. H.R. 4279 will help improve FSA participants' ability to personally manage the use of their health care resources.

H.R. 4281, the Small Business Health Act, would establish Association Health Plans (AHP) that allows small businesses to join together to cooperatively purchase health insurance at a lower cost. By joining together, small businesses would be able to offer more affordable health care coverage to their employees.

In the United States, more than 41 million people do not have health insurance. Those with coverage are experiencing increased premiums even as their overall coverage is declining. My goal is to ensure that all people, regardless of where they live, have access to quality health care, and it is my hope that these bills will begin the process of controlling the increasing costs of health care.

Joining Congressman Osborne to Support Big Brother, Big Sisters

— On Monday, I joined with Congressman Tom Osborne (NE-03) at a fund-raising banquet for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Ellis County. Congressman Osborne was the keynote speaker for the event, addressing a crowd of 300 people at the “Moments of Magic Banquet” about the importance of being a positive influence in the lives of children.

Congressman Osborne shared with the attendees why he believes mentoring is important and how we, as individuals, can have more of an effect than any government program could when it comes to helping kids in need. He shared his support for mentoring programs, such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and his success in starting a mentoring program in Nebraska. In Ellis County there are more than 900 children in need of a mentor.

Prior to the banquet, Congressman Osborne spoke to football players from Hays High School

at Lewis Field. He emphasized the importance of character and a strong spiritual foundation in peoples' life. Coach Osborne is a legend on the football field and a great role model in Congress, and I appreciate him sharing his wisdom and advice with the students.

House Passes WWII Resolution Honoring Veterans, New Memorial

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a Congressional resolution I introduced that recognizes the more than 16 million Americans who served during World War II, the 400,000 who died defending the country and the millions of men and women who supported the effort on the home front. The resolution also celebrates the completion of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. During this year's Memorial Day weekend, thousands of WWII veterans from across the country will gather in the nation's capital to dedicate the new WWII Memorial on the National Mall.

Our country owes a debt of gratitude to the World War II generation. Without their selfless sacrifice and undaunted courage, Americans would not have the freedoms that we enjoy today. Since the dedication ceremony is in just two weeks, I am pleased that we were able to pass this resolution. Because we are losing more and more World War II veterans every day, I am a thankful that my colleagues in the House have joined with me in recognizing their sacrifices and celebrating the completion of the National World War II Memorial.

Improving Summer Air Travel

On Thursday, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a hearing to review federal plans to prevent major passenger delays at the nation's airports during the coming summer. According to airline industry analysts, this summer will be the busiest travel period for airline passengers in the last four years. Based on advance bookings, the Air Transport Association estimates that the airlines will carry 65 million passengers each month during the summer - up 12 percent from last year's average of 58 million per month.

The increase in passenger travel is good news for our recovering economy. However, we must be certain that federal agencies are adopting plans that will help them cope with rapidly changing weather conditions and new security measures in order to reduce the overall level of delays. By implementing these plans now, travelers will be more likely to reach their destination on time during the busy summer months.

Speaking at Baker University Commencement

On Sunday afternoon, President and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents Reginald Robinson and I addressed the Baker University graduates during spring commencement ceremonies at Collins Sports and Convention Center in Baldwin. The University conferred more than 600 undergraduate, graduate and nursing degrees. At the celebration, I spoke about the importance of family and faith and the need to commit oneself to excellence, character and the service of others.

A full copy of the speech can be found at: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ks01_moran/sp051604BakerUniversity.html

In the Office

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In the office this week were members of the Community Bankers Association of Kansas to talk about economic development and agriculture lending, including Mike Johnson of Courtland, Joe Kennedy of Frankfort, Bruce Morgan of Roeland Park, and Marvin and Shari Weber of

Herington.

Steve Dinkel, pastor of Liberty Fellowship in Hays, was in to discuss religious issues. Ken Baker with Radio Kansas of Hutchinson was in to discuss improving non-commercial broadcasting technology.

Members of the Petroleum Marketers Association of America were in the office to talk about ways to improve the environment, including Mark Augustine of Salina, Marvin Spees of Topeka, Ken Suter of Kansas City and Jim Selenke of Wichita. Brad Seibel of McPherson and Patricia Andrews of Salina, representing Edward D. Jones and Company, were in to discuss retirement simplification. Members of the Kansas Association of Realtors were in to discuss home-ownership tax incentives and Association Health Plans.

In for a tour of the Capitol this week were Kathy Jacobs and Cindy Doerfler of Hays.

Very truly yours,

Jerry